

BBC Learning English
Words in the news
1st September 2008
*Young Britons shy away from
learning languages*



Two out of three teenagers in Britain are keen to work abroad but most of them don't speak foreign languages. Government figures show that 58% of 11-18 year olds in the UK have no foreign language skills, and this has a negative effect on the economy. Tom Burridge reports:

Fact or **fiction**? Most British people are lazy when it comes to learning a foreign language.

VOX POPs: - Fact.

- *Why do you say that?*

- 'Cos we don't need to. 'Cos everybody else speaks English.

- Fact. Foreigners make it too easy for you because they speak English when you're abroad.

Those views on the streets of London are **backed up** by figures **out** this week. The British Government found that 58 percent of 11-18 year olds in the UK do not speak a second language. However two thirds of teenagers in Britain want to work abroad when they're older - the countries of choice being Italy, Spain, France or China. The British Government **admits** there is a problem - that not enough young people continue learning a second language when they leave school. Teresa Tinley from the country's national centre of languages says it has **big implications** for the economy:

TINLEY: We are in a competitive global market and we need to be able to speak to our customers and our **potential customers**. Our trade is very much **geared towards** English-speaking countries. Our research shows that our exports are suffering.

The research is seen as **further evidence** that most young people **assume** they can **get by** in a foreign country by speaking English - something the authorities in London want to change.

Tom Burridge, BBC

Vocabulary and definitions

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| fiction | here, something that is made up, untrue |
| backed up | confirmed, proven |
| out | here, published, made known to the public |
| admits | recognises, says it's a fact |
| big implications | serious negative effect/consequences |
| potential customers | people or companies that might use your services or buy goods from you in the future |
| geared towards | directed/aimed at |
| further evidence | more proof, another confirmation |
| assume | believe something is true without question or proof |
| get by | survive, find their way about |

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7584662.stm

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/09/080901_languages.shtml